Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Volume XXVIII] *September, 1913* [*Number 3*

POLITICAL SCIENCE
QUARTERLY

HAY AND HISTORY

WHAT is here to be discussed concretely is the village community. This has already been considered, by actual count, in more than a thousand books and essays and written about under titles more seemly and more modest. Yet I venture to tax the patience of the reader with the old story once more; not even with the story, because all I am offering here is an interpretation.

I ask only this question: Can the reader tell me *why* the village community was so prevalent in Europe, regardless of race and clime? The reader, if he belong to one school, will say that the village community is a survival of an early Teutonic or even of a universal ancient custom. If he belong to another school, he will cautiously answer that wherever we meet this institution in the past it is invariably in connection with the manorial system. Thus the thousand contributions to the subject do not answer the question *why*. Those of one school practically say that it existed but that they do not know why; those of the other school intimate that the lords of the manor introduced it but that they do not know why. Worse yet, not only has the question *why* not been answered; it has not even been asked.

Hence there is after all a justification for one more essay on the subject, in which the simple question is asked and a plain answer given.

This is an interpretation, not a story, and it is possible that some kindly reader may come to the conclusion that, after all, the writer is more interested in a problem of which the village community is but a manifestation,—the problem of the life and death of the land and of the peoples thereon possibly. But an economist may be, and a farmer must be, concrete. Let us therefore talk about the village community.

First of all, what have the discussions been about? The controversy covers several problems: did or did not the early Teutons have a "Mark Association"; is or is not the village community of to-day a survival of a system when all land was universally held in common ownership; do we find the *Mark Genossenschaft,* the community of free Mark associates, in England, Scandinavia and among the Slavs; is or is not the village community in Germany, Russia, France, England and elsewhere, after all, but a product of serfdom and the manorial system; is or is not the Roman *villa* responsible for the manorial organization of western Europe?

These are the main problems that have been discussed for many decades under the general heading of "village community." The controversies have been too often acrimonious. While they have unquestionably added to the sum total of our knowledge about miscellaneous historical subjects of importance, the real problem has been obscured rather than illuminated by the wealth of historical data.

Let us see what is the real problem that a village community presents. There are thousands of old villages in Europe where the holdings of the individual peasants have never been inclosed. The holdings of one are intermixed with the holdings of his neighbors in the open fields. Let us examine such a village.

First of all, we find all the homesteads grouped together. In some localities they form one long street; in others, two streets; in still others, they are laid out in a semi-circle. Near the homesteads are the barns, stables, hovels, vegetable gardens and a few fruit trees, but never the field that belongs to the individual farmer.

The farming land presents a curious sight. It looks like a patchwork quilt. You see a number of land areas, of flats, of plots, as a rule square or oblong in shape, each of them divided into very numerous, narrow strips of land. Sometimes the three fields of the village form three quite uniform flats, subdivided into numerous strips, long and narrow, running in the same direction; but oftener you find that each of the three fields is made up of many such flats, each of them subdivided into strips or ribbons of land. These strips belong to different owners, but they are not fenced. They are separated from each other by balks of turf, or unploughed land. Strips in some patches are, at times, so narrow that one wonders how they could be cultivated.

The individual peasant may own ten, twenty, or more strips in each of the three farming fields, but the strips of the individual farmer, even in the same field, do not adjoin each other. They are at times quite a distance apart. They are the farmer's individual property which he has inherited and which he may sell. But in the use of his property he is necessarily restricted. First of all he is restricted in the rotation of crops, and in the type of tillage. The third field is the fallow field on which the cattle of all the villagers pasture. The cattle are also pastured on the stubble as soon as the harvest is removed. Hence it becomes necessary for all the members of the community not only to sow the same crop on the same field, but to sow at the same time and to harvest at the same time.

Besides the cultivated fields the village has as a rule some waste that serves as a permanent pasture, woods and a meadow. None of this is subdivided or fenced. It is used in common, with restrictions varying in different localities. As a rule, with a definite acreage in the cultivated fields goes a proportionate and quite definite acreage in the meadows. Let us say that a certain farmer owns two acres of meadow land. It is left, however, to a yearly drawing of lots to determine where his two acres are to be located. He will get neither more nor less than the two acres to which he has a title, but the location of these two acres may vary from year to year. As soon as the meadow hay is mowed, the entire meadow is thrown open for common pasturage of all members of the village community. Sometimes all varieties of cattle are allowed there; oftener sheep will be restricted to the waste and fallow fields or to a special part of the meadow.

This is the organization of the village community as we find it still in numberless localities of northern, western, and south-eastern Europe, an institution that has given rise to so prodigious a literature.

It is not an idle problem, either. Agriculture was until recently the sole basis of state and society. It is, and will remain, of paramount significance. Anything so fundamentally characteristic as is the village community of European farming is of fundamental economic and historical importance. The problem of the village community is not a new one. The enclosure of the commons shook the very foundations of sixteenth-century England. Yet curiously enough it became a scientific and bookish problem only in the nineteenth century. This bookish spirit is nowhere so well expressed as in Wagner's rejoinder to Faust:

> I often had myself fantastic notions,
> But never have I felt the like emotions.
> 'Tis tiresome on green woods and fields to look,
> The bird's wing crave I not in slightest measure.
> How otherwise bears us the mental pleasure
> From page to page, from book to book!
> Then grow the winter nights so lovely fair,
> A warm and blissful life all limbs pervading,
> And oh! unroll'st thou e'en an ancient parchment rare,
> All Heaven descends to thee that knows no fading.

Tiresome as it may be to look at green woods and fields, let us do so for a change. If we should take with us a plain American farmer and show him a European village community he could not possibly believe his eyes. First of all he would observe the homestead with the farm buildings all clustered together, far away from the farming land. This would naturally look to him just as if an American farming community should live in a city, keeping there the horses, fodder *etc.*, but going out every morning to farm somewhere in the country. The American farmer would hardly know what to think about such a situation. True, he knows of wealthy farmers who live in the town in the winter, or even go visiting or traveling in the winter, but they can do so because during the planting and harvesting season they are on their jobs without wasting a minute of their own or of their horses' time. What are we to tell this plain American farmer? We consult all the books and find that they are unanimous on this point. In fact it is the only point on which the various writers are unanimous. The European peasant lives in villages *for protection.* Protection of what? The farm land, the crops, the cattle on the pastures? Of course not. They live in villages for their own protection, for the protection of themselves. Shall we give this answer to the sturdy son of an American pioneer? His comment could easily be guessed, as well as his praise and thanksgiving for having come from a different stock. But that is where our farmer is quite mistaken. His stock, whether English or Irish, German or Scandinavian, Magyar or Slav, have all lived in precisely such villages in the old country.

But, curiously, if we consult documentary evidence we find that early agricultural pioneers and settlers in newly colonized European territory, where they needed "protection" the most, lived as a matter of fact not in villages but on single farms. Their "villages" consisted of single homesteads, but as the population grew even these communities often developed the same uniform type as the European village, with all the homesteads huddled together. Instead, however, of consulting thousands of documents let us try another method. Let us give our poor ancestors the benefit of the doubt and assume that they had some common sense. If they so universally persisted in holding to an arrangement so obviously and seriously inconvenient there must have been some good reason for it. When we proceed on this assumption, we almost invariably find that a "good reason" is a plain, technical and economic necessity. So it is in the case of the European village. Where would you locate the farmhouses, if you do not locate them together in a special area? Would you put the house and garden on the farm land? If so, to which of the farmer's numerous and widely scattered strips and ribbons of land will you attach his homestead? And if his house is securely attached to one of his strips, will he not be just as far away from all his other strips as when he lives in the village? Furthermore, if his homestead and garden were located on one of his strips in one of the three farming fields, he will find himself every third year on a fallow field, where the cattle of all his neighbors are grazing, and perhaps miles away from the strips he is cultivating in the other two fields; besides, his buildings and his garden will interfere every year with pasturing on the stubble.

Thus the village community and the possession of isolated, intermixed strips of land necessitates the living together outside of the area given over to tillage, and thus there is formed a village street.

Now let us turn to the farming land.

The reader knows of course that in no occupation is the time element of so decisive importance as in farming. If the land is not ploughed and if the crop is not planted at the right time, the partial loss, and at times the total ruin, of a crop may be confidently expected. This is particularly the case on heavy clay land, which drains very slowly. If you do not happen to plough the land and plant your crop at an early favorable moment, a single rain may delay your work for some time, and just as the ground is about fit for work another rain will emphasize the point that farming brooks no delay. Yet if the farmer should be driven in despair to plough and to sow in the wet, he will have good cause to remember one of Tusser's "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry,"—that "who soweth in rain he shall reap it with tears."

Thus farming is in a sense a race with the season, with the weather as a constantly menacing and incalculable element. That is why from time immemorial the farming season has taxed the effort of men and beasts to the very limit of their physical endurance.

Now let us have another look at the village community.

Let us take an English example. South Luffenham in Rutland was not inclosed until 1879. It had 1074 acres, divided into 1238 pieces or strips, among 22 owners. Think of a farmer who has to attend 40-odd acres in nearly 60 scattered pieces, dotting a surface of over 1000 acres! Think of the waste of time and effort in cultivating such land strips! But this happens to be a small village community. Imagine a large community, where the acreage of the individual farmer is scattered in intermixed strips over an area of many thousand acres! Why should humanity have so handicapped itself intentionally?

It is a survival, you will say. Quite true. One finds the situation in the Middle Ages whether the farmer was freeman or serf. But does the word "survival" in this particular case explain why there was a survival? Anything that is serviceable or even indifferent may survive. But is it sensible to assume that a most serious and burdensome handicap can survive without sufficient reason for surviving? But perhaps you do not belong to the school which believes that the village community is a survival from the dawn of civilization, perhaps you accept the only possible alternative, that the village community is a product of the manorial system.

It is clear that the intermixed strips of land result in waste of energy of both men and beasts. If the man is a serf, the loss of his time and the impairment of his efficiency is in the last analysis the loss of the lord. The serf must be provided with a living from the product of his labor and only the surplus over this goes to the landlord. The lack of productivity is therefore the landlord's loss. Why then should the landlords have introduced such a system in England as well as in Roumania, in Germany as well as in Russia, in France as well as in Hungary? How can such uniformity be explained? Manorial systems varied from age to age and from locality to locality. Here they commuted services to money rent, there the landlord would not even reserve a domain but left everything to the peasants for an "obrok," a heavy rental paid in produce. They have varied the internal workings of the village community. In Russia, for instance, they introduced periodical redivisions of the land-allotments of the serfs. The serfs there did not have a virgate-system. Their holdings varied and were dependent upon the fluctuations in the size of the individual serf families, upon the increase of the entire serf population of the manor, and upon the acreage of the manor that could be set aside for the serfs. One could go not only from country to country but from county to county, yes even from manor to manor, and write a story of greater or lesser variations in agrarian relationships, but the underlying basis was the same village community! There were times and localities in which the serf had no claims or rights sanctioned by custom, where the landlord's arbitrary power could not be disputed; and yet the village community was there! How then is the village community to be explained?

We have seen that the village community was a time-robbing and in many other respects a handicapping institution. Already in the sixteenth century Fitzherbert and Tusser were heaping curses upon the village community. Discussing this system Tusser says:

> What drudgerie more anywhere?
> Lesse good thereof where can you tell?

Why then did such an institution persist in surviving? There must have been some circumstance either of a compelling or of a compensating nature. Where are we to look for it if not in the prevailing methods of farming, the treatment of the soil, and the crops that were cultivated?

There are some very suggestive lines in Lucretius. At the end of the second book where he discourses about the world's growing old, he says about the earth:

> She brought forth Herbs, which now the feeble Soil
> Can scarce afford to all our pain and toil.
> We labour, sweat, and yet by all this strife
> Can scarce get Corn and Wine enough for life.
> Our Men and Oxen groan, and never cease,
> So fast our labours grow, our Fruits decrease.
> Nay oft the Farmers with a sigh complain
> That they have labour'd all the year in vain. . .

But did not people know about improving the soil with manure, and making it productive? Yes, indeed, they knew all about it and practiced manuring. But to have manure for the improvement of the soil one has to keep cattle. Did they not keep cattle? Yes, indeed, they kept cattle; but the question is, could the individual farmer keep on his land *enough* cattle to improve or to maintain the productivity of his entire farm? With the cattle kept upon his entire farm he could undoubtedly have fertilizer enough to maintain the productivity of at least a certain portion, but if he should apply manure to a part only, the rest of the land would rapidly deteriorate. If he chose rather to distribute an insufficient amount over his entire farm, the whole would gradually be depleted of nitrogen, humus *etc.*, and steadily lose in productivity.

Let us examine the mediæval situation.

The field crops were: first year, wheat or rye; second, oats or barley or beans; third, fallow. Where in this schedule does grass-seeding come and where are the hayfields? *There were none.* The economist who knows so much about the industrial revolution has overlooked another revolution that is of fully as great importance, *a revolution that fundamentally changed the basis of agriculture, that abolished the law of diminishing returns as expressed by Lucretius, and as later (in its original version) discovered by the economists just at the time when it ceased to be true. This great revolution was the introduction of grass-seed and of the "great trefoils," the various clovers, including later on Lucerne or alfalfa.*

There were no hayfields, therefore, before the latter half of the seventeenth century. How then could they keep cattle? They had straw and meadow grass. Meadow grass could grow only in very definite places on low and moist land which lay as a rule along the course of a stream. This gave the meadow a monopolistic value, which it lost after the introduction of grass and clover in the rotation of crops. That explains why we find in Thorold Roger's work that farming land in the last six centuries has increased in value sixty times, and meadow land but twelve times. It simply means that six centuries ago meadow land was, in comparison with land under tillage, relatively five times as valuable as it is to-day; and it further emphasizes how indispensable a little bit of meadow was to a farm.

The meadow was used first of all for mowing, and after the hay crop was gathered it was used for pasturage. The right of pasturage was as a rule limited to the number of cattle that the commoner could keep through the winter. It is the German *Ueberwinterungsmassstab* which we find prevailing in England and elsewhere. There was no necessity for stinting the common pasturage any more definitely. The stern sway of the winter scarcity attended to that. The quantity of meadow hay gathered was a mere trifle, because the proportion of meadow land to the tillage fields was slight. So, for instance, in Hewsted, Suffolk, in 1285 on seven manors together that proportion was but 1 to 24.

We must remember that even turnips, which were known as garden roots to Tusser, were not introduced as a field crop before the end of the seventeenth century. Thus the wintering of cattle was a most precarious enterprise. Only an extremely limited number of cattle could be kept barely alive through the winter. The value of cows as milk producers was slight, even in the summer; in the winter it was trifling. Hence the saying:

A swine doth sooner than a cowe
Bring an ox to the plough.

Because of scarcity of milk in the winter, the farmer aimed, as a rule, to have his cows fresh late in the fall; yet four-fifths of the total annual yield of milk was in the months from April to September, when the cows were on pasture. But even then Walter of Henley, the thirteenth-century bailiff, who shows a distinct tendency to exaggerate rather than to underestimate, expects but 3½ lbs. of butter from 3 cows in one week. Only a good-for-nothing farmer will today keep a cow that is not doing better than Walter's three cows put together. But on the other hand, nothing could be expected from cows kept during the winter almost entirely on straw and tree loppings. Even straw was scarce, because of the exhaustion of the soil.[1] Barn manure was therefore obviously produced in inadequate quantities. The impossibility of getting a sufficient amount of manure for the fields is adequately indicated by the miserable pettiness of English manorial regulations, which required the sheep of the commoners to be folded on the domain of the lord.

It is not within our province to go into agrotechnical details and to describe what the mediæval farmer knew but seldom practiced, for lack of time and because of poor means of communication, in the way of liming sour clay ground *etc.* Plant production is determined by that one of the necessary elements that is available in the least quantity. It is a matter of record that the mediæval farmer had not enough and could not have quite enough manure to *maintain* the productivity of the soil. To *improve* its productivity was out of the question.

---

[1] In the years 1243-8 the average yield of wheat at Combe, Oxfordshire, was 5 bu. per acre, of barley a little over 5, oats 7. The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester gives an average yield of wheat over a large area in 1298-9 at 4.3 bushels per acre. Curtler, Short History of English Agriculture, p. 33.

If any good farmer should today take up a worn-out farm, which still has some fair fields, but others that have grown wild, and still others that are bare, washed and gullied, he should be able to make all the fields look alike in a very few years. As fast as fodder can be produced stock will be added, the poor lands heavily manured, farmed around and turned perhaps into an alfalfa field that will rejuvenate the soil.

Compare again the sentiment of Lucretius, "So fast our labours grow, the fruits decrease," with a statement in a recent Bulletin of the U. S. Department of Agriculture about the introduction of sweet clover—*Melolitus alba*—in Kentucky.

> A decade ago many farms were coming to be abandoned, owing to their low productive capacity. Many of the fields contained gullies, which washed, making the farms even less valuable. Sweet clover was introduced as a bee plant in some of the waste places in this section and proved so efficient as a soil-improver that it has been largely utilized on a great many farms in this section. . . . As a result of the introduction of sweet clover many of these farms are no longer abandoned but are producing satisfactory incomes for those who are working them. The fields are utilized as pastures and for hay while the soil is being built up and the gullies stopped from washing. When the process of natural reclamation has gone far enough the ground is plowed and put into corn.[1]

It is only for the sake of the concrete example given in the *Bulletin*, picked up by chance, that I mention sweet clover, which is, as a matter of fact, an inferior fodder plant and far inferior to alfalfa as a soil renovator. It only shows that improvement of poor soil can be and is undertaken as a matter of course and of daily routine by every prudent farmer in modern times. The attitude towards a variety of soils of different qualities is quite different in modern times from what it used to be. In the middle ages, or rather in the dark ages of agriculture, *the state in which the land was found was by and large the upper limit of its productive capacity. It might deteriorate, it was likely to deteriorate, but it was not likely to be improved.* Let us see what is the result of such an attitude.

---

[1] U. S. Dept. of Agriculture Bulletin, 485, pp. 34-35.

If two of us chance to be joint heirs to a two-hundred-acre farm containing fields and patches of ever so many different qualities, what are we likely to do? We will divide it in two more or less even parts, and call it fair. A sense of justice may perhaps at times suggest dividing the farm unevenly, so as to compensate poorer quality with larger quantity. I have before me some documents of the past which show us that this was not the way an equitable division of an ancestral farm was carried through.

Let us go to a region where the existence of a village community was out of the question. It is in the northernmost Russia.[1] The settlements there were single isolated farms (German, *Einzelhof*, Latin, *Mansus*). They called these farms "villages." Later on, when they actually had villages with several farms in each, they would still call their farms their "village" situated in village so and so. So, for instance, in a certain district which in 1651 numbered 17 villages, eight of these villages still consisted of one farm each, five of two farms, one of three, three of four farms.

The farms were private property, which could be bought and sold, inherited, mortgaged or disposed of by will and testament. It is important to observe what occurs when they are divided among heirs, when the "village" that consisted of one farm becomes a village of two, three or more farms. Both wills and tax-books contain complete descriptions of the farm lands. And what do we find there? Was a farm when divided between two heirs divided into two parts? Not at all. Here is an example: "Village" Novinki (Newlands) divided into ten different plots, each of these plots divided evenly between the two heirs. Another farm (Village Towra) is divided according to quality into twenty-two such plots, and each of these plots into two shares.

---

[1] Detailed information, documents and authorities are given in the first few chapters of my book, Die Feldgemeinschaft in Russland, Jena, 1898. A mass of facts and information is there, but I passed there the real problem without ever noticing it.

I need hardly point out that the moment the land strips of one owner are intermixed with the land strips of his neighbors, we have before us a village community. One could not have a right of way to the various strips, nor pasture on them when they are lying fallow or in stubble, without a uniform—which means compulsory—rotation of crops.

The principle of equity that prompted such a division of inherited property is obvious. Would some eastern tribesman who left behind him four sons, four camels, four horses, four sheep and four dogs, leave to one of his sons four camels and to another four dogs? Or are his heirs likely to receive, share and share alike, the different kinds of property left by their father? Sufficient reason has been given for showing why in the dark ages of agriculture a meadow was altogether a different type of property from arable field, and why under the agrotechnical conditions then prevailing arable fields of different quality were considered a different and a *permanently* different kind of property, equitably divisible only in strips.

A small garden plot could be improved, but poor farming land had no chance of betterment. If its condition altered, it would only be for the worse. Under these circumstances the equitable division of a farm made up of pieces of land of different qualities led inevitably to the strip system.

Does the manorial system present to us a situation so vastly different? Whether we find serfs or customary tenants, whether the services are commuted or not, the obligations resting on those who were tilling the ground were as a rule uniform. One serf was required to perform the same services as another. If the services were commuted the rents and fines were as a rule uniform, a uniformity sanctioned by custom if not by law. Under these circumstances it was obvious that serfs and tenants respectively had to be provided with land of equal value.

Under agricultural conditions as they existed there was no way of getting around or of ignoring the different qualities of soil. It was like mining: some soil was pay dirt, other soil was not. Soil could not be improved nor could hayfields be created, as we may create them today by throwing broadcast anywhere we please some seeds of timothy or clover. They were necessarily located in a certain and given place near the brook. Equitable distribution meant access to a share in the meadow, meant a division of fields into strips that went through good and bad, dry and wet soil, with rights of pasturage, of mast and firewood *etc.*—meant, in short, a village community.

Was the village community therefore necessary and inevitable, in spite of all its inherent annoyances, which Tusser characterized as " too much to be borne? " It is an idle question. The village community was dictated neither by fate nor by fetich. There were for all we know local conditions that did not favor the origin or spread of the village community, but we do know and understand the situation which suggested the village community as the sole prevailing method of equitable distribution. It is no more a peculiarity of the Slav and Teuton or the Aryan race in general, than are clay and sand, stony hills and rich meadows peculiarities of the "*Christlich Germanische Cultur.*" Nor should too much stress be laid on the " equitable " side of distribution. If large estates were operated by slaves fed by the master or by free laborers paid wages in money or in produce, there would have been no village community under the manorial system. But at a given time, under the prevailing conditions, it was found more convenient to let labor maintain itself. For that purpose land had to be set aside for the laborers and then indeed the question of equitable distribution of that land had to arise. The solution was the village community.

The situation was similar when small heirship properties required equitable division. Some historians and sociologists find peculiar inner satisfaction whenever evidence shows that drawing of lots was resorted to. The drawing of lots is to them a character certificate of the " primitiveness " of the institution, it proves to them that the village community is a " survival " from the times when all land whether under tillage or not was held in common by the free associates of the " mark," or its English, Irish, Russian, Indian *etc.*, equivalent.

Other scholars, while acknowledging the reallotment of meadow land, frown severely at any possible allotment of arable land. But they are wrong. Suppose four heirs inherit four seemingly equally good horses, but two of the heirs seem both to have a strong predilection for the same horse. Will they be doomed to serve as exhibits in the survival gallery if they should match pennies for the possession of the horse in question? Contention is never profitable and drawing lots for land strips is as good a way of avoiding difficulties as any. Certainly it is a survival, but so is common sense. For the custom of a *periodical* reallotment of land under tillage, only Russia can be pointed to with assurance. There reallotment was readjustment, because the Russian manorial system did not grant to each peasant family a " virgate " or " hufe " or a certain customary unit of land for customary services or rents, but divided the entire manor or part thereof among the peasant families in proportion to the working capacity of these respective families. Therefore, as the working capacity of the individual families increased, the land of the manor had to be redivided and the individual family holdings proportionately readjusted. Such is the simple explanation of periodical reallotment. The practice, moreover, is one of late origin. Among some of the crown peasants it was as a matter of fact introduced as late as 1830–1840, and introduced practically by force, in spite of the bitter opposition of the landholding peasantry.

I know of places in northern Russia where in the seventeenth century, land-strips, though intermixed and under the usual restrictions of a village community, but in private ownership, were seemingly redivided among the several owners. But this was because of disputes over the original division, due, as a rule, to faulty surveying. They had no trained surveyors with modern instruments. When such contentions became a nuisance, the contending parties as a rule signed a document in which they expressed complete satisfaction with their strips and boundaries and agreed for themselves, their heirs and assignees, never to demand another redivision or adjustment.

The yearly reallotment of meadow land was a very widespread custom in Europe. As a rule the commoner owned a definite amount of the meadow, let us say an acre, or two acres, as the case might be. His acreage in the meadow was always proportionate to his acreage under tillage, but just which specific acreage of the meadow, which plot of the meadow, he was to mow in the given year was left to lot. We know that in the absence of herbage and clover, meadow land was of the highest value. But since, after mowing, it was used for common pasture, permanent fences of individual meadow plots were out of the question. Furthermore, permanent ownership of a specific portion of the meadow had other difficulties. The site of such a meadow we can easily imagine. It was in a valley near a stream. The land as a rule was made land, which had washed down from the hills or higher grounds. Every one knows how wayward a meadow stream is. It is prone to wander from year to year; here it abandons its course, for reasons entirely of its own choosing; there it makes a nice little lagoon, or playfully deposits some very fine gravel on what might have been good meadow grass. Every few years such a stream is doing some surveying entirely of its own. It will take a few rods of land from one farmer by running through his land and give a few rods to another farmer by adding to his land the course that it abandoned. When the meadow portions are extremely small as well as extremely precious, a yearly reallotment of the meadow acreage suggests itself as a matter of equity as well as of common sense.

The introduction of grass seed and clovers marked the end of the dark ages of agriculture. It is the greatest of revolutions, the revolution against the supreme law, the law of the land, the law of diminishing returns and of soil exhaustion.

Go to the ruins of ancient and rich civilizations in Asia Minor, Northern Africa or elsewhere. Look at the unpeopled valleys, at the dead and buried cities, and you can decipher there the promise and the prophecy that the law of soil exhaustion held in store for all of us. It is but the story of an abandoned farm on a gigantic scale. Depleted of humus by constant cropping, land could no longer reward labor and support life; so the people abandoned it. Deserted, it became a desert; the light soil was washed by the rain and blown around by shifting winds.

Only with the introduction of grass seeding did it become possible to keep a sufficient amount of stock not only to maintain the fertility of the soil but steadily to improve it. The soil instead of being taxed year after year under the heavy strain of grain crops, was being renovated by the legumes that gathered nitrogen from the air and stored it on tubercles attached to their roots. The deep roots of the clover penetrated the soil, that no plough ever touched. Legumes like alfalfa, producing pound by pound more nutritious fodder than did meadow grass, produced acre by acre two and three times the amount. And when such a field was turned under to make place for a grain crop, the deep and heavy sod, the mass of decaying roots, offered the farmer "virgin" soil, where previously even five bushels of wheat could not be gathered. The tale is a simple one, and it is told.

In the historical controversy over the village community, the real problem was not touched upon. Deeds and codices were closely examined, but what one could lay his hands upon remained unnoticed. The village exists, the intermixed strips exist, the commons exist. The problem therefore was first of all—what is the village community, and secondly, why is it? The question how it developed would then have answered itself. But instead of this search for an explanation we find a quest for the character of the *prototype* of the present village community. This prototype was believed to have been found in an association of freemen that held all land in common, whether arable or not. With the discovery of this prototype, the real problem, *i. e.*, the explanation of the intermixed strips, with resulting compulsory rotation of crops and common pasturage—which constitute a village community—was lost sight of.

Fustel de Coulanges was merciless in his criticism of the documentary evidence submitted by Maurer and others of his school. But just as Maurer failed to see that his very documents prove personal and not common ownership, so did Fustel de Coulanges fail to see anything but private estates in the personally owned strips that were obviously within the boundaries and under the restrictions of a village community. The mediæval expressions for the word boundaries are *marcha*, *marca*, *finis*, or *terminus* (the Bavarian law says *terminus id est marca*). Fustel de Coulanges quotes: "*dono portionem meam quae est in marca Odradesheim*" and tells us later on: "In the examples given by Maurer, I recognize the existence of the Mark, but a mark which was the same thing as a *villa*, that is a private estate."[1] To my way of thinking one's *portio* within a *marca* looks like private ownership within the boundaries of a village community named *Odradesheim.*

If the village community is strange or peculiar among freemen, it is if anything even stranger among serfs, where the landlord could make any arrangement that may have pleased him. Yet this, Fustel de Coulanges entirely overlooks when he sees nothing but a private estate belonging to a monastery in a quotation of his which unquestionably indicates a manorial village community. "*—rustici ecclesiae pro quantitate et limitibus contenderent. Ego Hermannus abbas . . . compromissum fuit ut maximus campus per funiculos mensuraretur et cuilibet hubae 12 jugera deputarentur . . . in totidem partes secundus campus et tertius divideretur. . . . Inchoata est ista divisio per Alvinum monachum scribentem et fratem Bertholdum prepositum et Rudolfum officialem cum funiculis mensurantes.*"[2] How can several *rustici* have strips in the three fields, without having their land intermixed, hence, without having common pasture on the fallow and stubble and therefore compulsory rotation of crops? Of course Fustel de Coulanges is right in saying that the document does not tell us what Maurer supposed, but indicates rather "a division among tenants carried on by the proprietor."[3] But it tells us quite enough to forget Maurer and pay some attention to the character of the farming indicated by the document. Such quotations, which Maurer misunderstood as common ownership and Fustel de Coulanges misunderstood as private unrestricted ownership, could be found on page after page. So, on the next page: "Another less rich can only give a *huba, but he gives at the same time the portion of the forest to which his huba has a right,*" or in the note on the same page (43): "I will explain elsewhere the meaning of *portio*. All I need say at present is that this word, which occurs more than three hundred times in our authorities, always means a part belonging to an owner. A *portio* is spoken of as *sold, bequeathed and given*." Three hundred land transactions are recorded. The land was sold, bequeathed or given away. The land was personally owned. There is no question about that. But was the use of the land restricted or unrestricted? If unrestricted, why are the respective properties in 300 different transactions characterized and legally described not as independent units but as *parts of units?*

---

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, The Origin of Property in Land, translated by Margaret Ashley, with an introductory chapter by W. J. Ashley. London, 1891, p. 35.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 41.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 42.

I feel very ungrateful in criticizing Fustel de Coulanges. I honor his name and appreciate deeply the work he has done. And after all I am criticizing him, not for what he has done, but for what he failed to do, which is probably unjust.

I must apologize for one other statement. I have emphasized several times that the real problem has been entirely overlooked. This is not quite true, for W. J. Ashley saw the problem clearly. In his introductory chapter to Fustel de Coulanges's book, as early as 1891, he wrote:

> In the mediæval manor there were two elements, the *seigneurial*—the relations of the tenants to the lord; and the *communal*—the relations of the tenants to one another. The mark theory taught that the seigneurial was grafted on to the communal. The value of the work of M. Fustel de Coulanges and Mr. Seebohm is in showing that we cannot find a time when the seigneurial element was absent; and also in pointing to reasons, in my opinion conclusive, for connecting that element with the Roman villa. *But the communal element is still an unsolved mystery.*[1]

It is the solution of this mystery that is here submitted to the reader.

VLADIMIR G. SIMKHOVITCH.

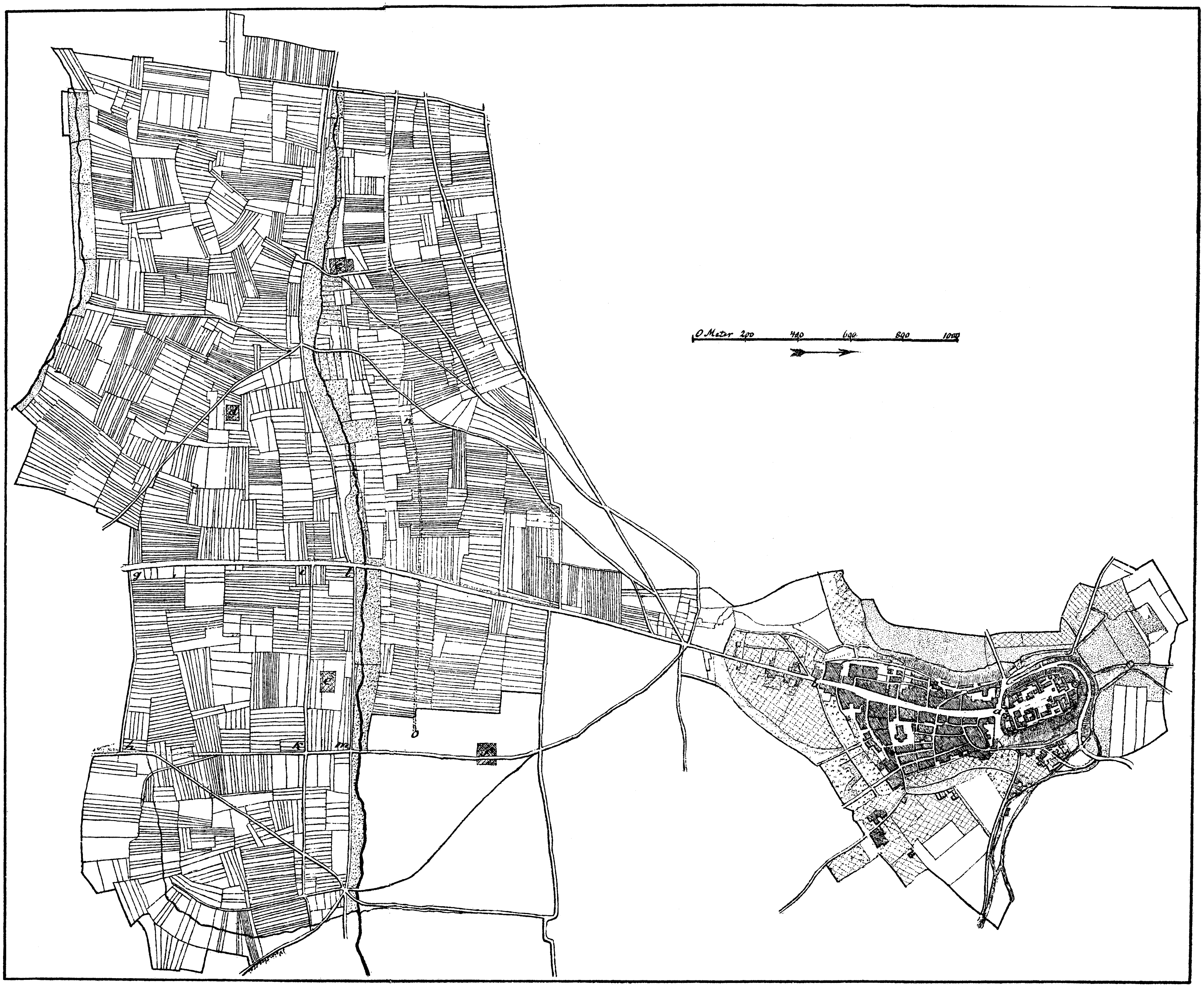
---

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

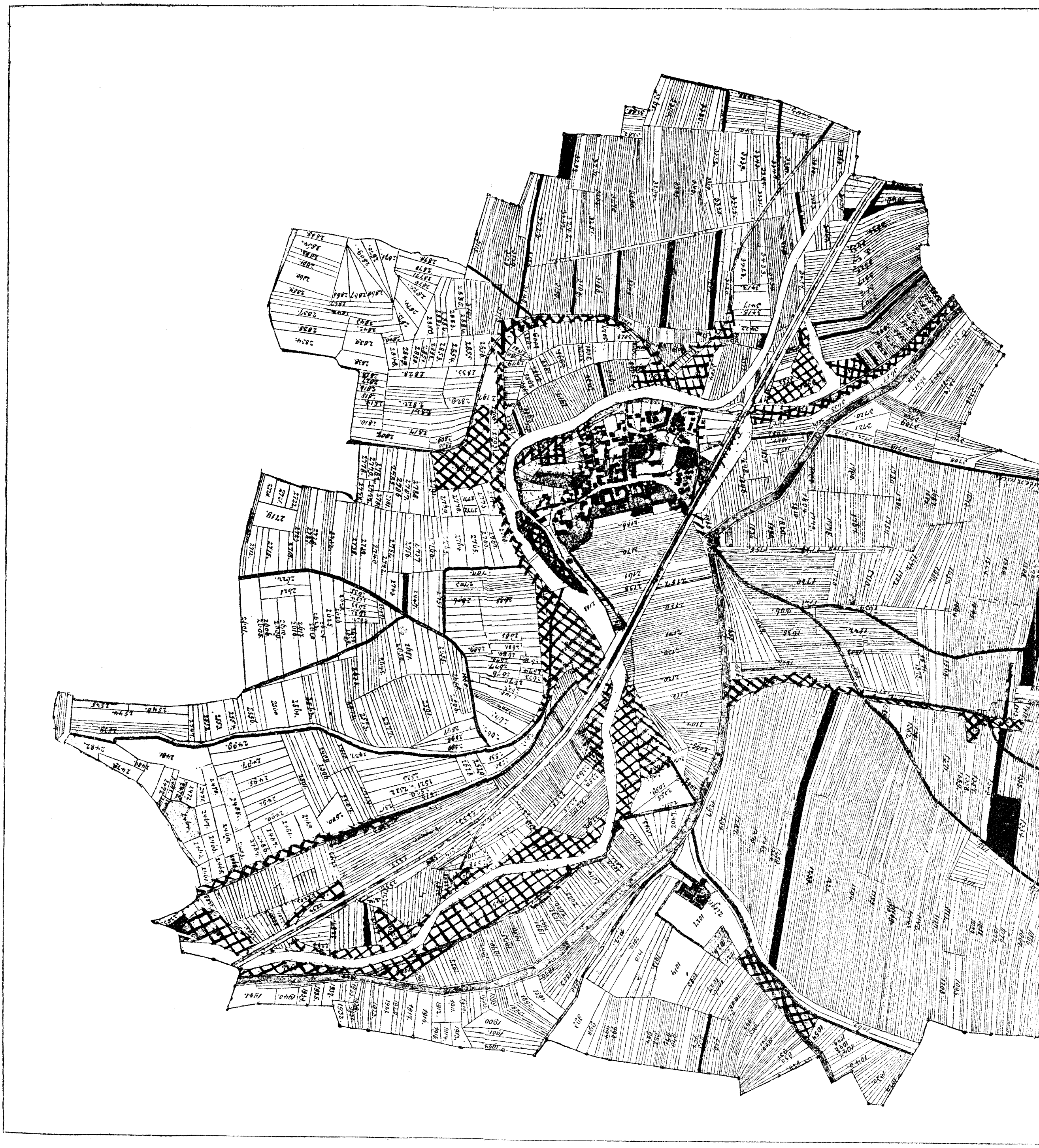
Specimen Surveys
of
Two Village Communities

Reproduced from August Meitzen's Siedelung und Agrarwesen der Westgermanen und Ostergermanen, der Kelten, Römer, Finnen und Slawen. Atlas to Volume III. (Berlin, 1895. Verlag von Wilhelm Hertz).

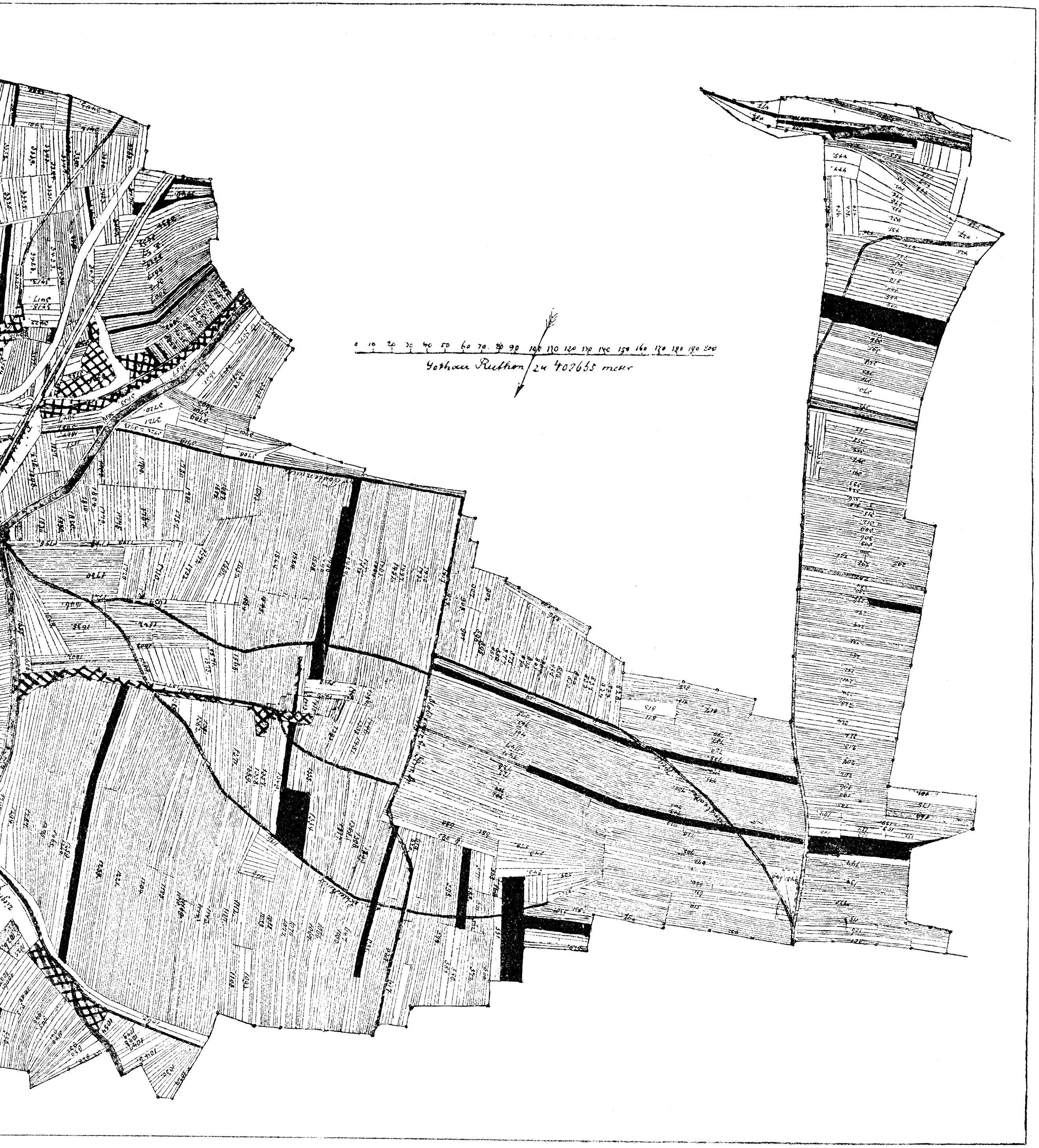
FRIEDBERG in der Wetterau.

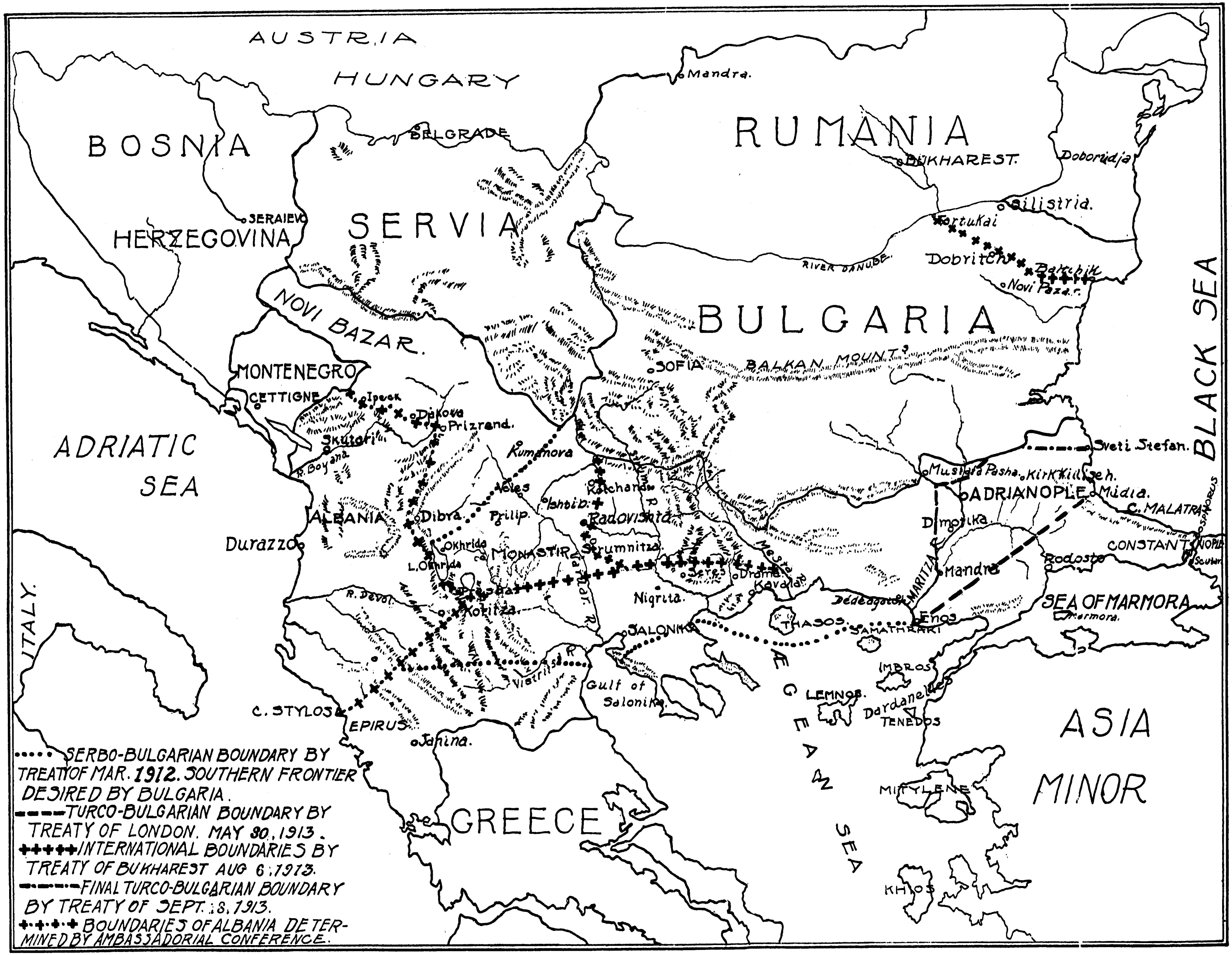


BISCHLEBEN, Herzogthum Gotha.



BISCHLEBEN, Herzogthum Gotha.




AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
BOSNIA
HERZEGOVINA
SERAIEVO
SERVIA
BELGRADE
Mandra.
RUMANIA
BUKHAREST.
Doboridja
Silistria.
Tortukai
Dobritch
Baltchik
Novi Pazar.
RIVER DANUBE
BULGARIA
SOFIA
BALKAN MOUNTS
BLACK SEA
NOVI BAZAR.
MONTENEGRO
CETTIGNE
Ipeck
Djakova
Prizrand.
Skutari
R. Boyana
ADRIATIC SEA
ALBANIA
Durazzo
Kumanova
Veles
Dibra
Prilip
Ishtib
Kotchana
Radovishta
Strumnitza
Okhrida
L. Okhrida
MONASTIR
Vardar R.
Struma R.
Mesta R.
L. Presba
Koritza
R. Devol
Seres
Drama
Kavala
Nigrita
SALONIKA
Gulf of Salonika
Vistritsa R.
C. STYLOS
EPIRUS
Janina.
GREECE
ITALY.
Sveti Stefan.
Mustafa Pasha
Kirk Kilisseh.
ADRIANOPLE
Midia.
C. MALATRA
BOSPHORUS
Dimotika
MARITZA
Mandra
Rodosto
CONSTANTINOPLE
Scutari
SEA OF MARMORA
Marmora.
Dedeagatch
Enos
THASOS
SAMATHRAKI
ÆGEAN SEA
IMBROS
LEMNOS.
Dardanelles
TENEDOS
MITYLENE
KHIOS
ASIA MINOR
SERBO-BULGARIAN BOUNDARY BY TREATY OF MAR. 1912. SOUTHERN FRONTIER DESIRED BY BULGARIA.
TURCO-BULGARIAN BOUNDARY BY TREATY OF LONDON. MAY 30, 1913.
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES BY TREATY OF BUKHAREST AUG 6, 1913.
FINAL TURCO-BULGARIAN BOUNDARY BY TREATY OF SEPT. 18, 1913.
BOUNDARIES OF ALBANIA DETERMINED BY AMBASSADORIAL CONFERENCE.